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ABSTRACT

This book argues against the politicization of literature and presents a guide to the great works and essential writers of the ages, the "Western Canon." The book studies 26 writers and seeks to isolate the qualities that made these authors canonical, that is, authoritative in Western culture. Noting that although originally the "Canon" meant the choice of books in teaching institutions, the title here is meant not only for the student but for any reader "who follows the art and passion of reading well and deeply." The book is divided into five sections: (1) On the Canon; (2) THe Aristocratic Age (including Shakespeare, Cervantes, Montaigne, Moliere, and Goethe) (3) The Democratic Age (including Emily Dickinson, Tolstoy, and Ibsen); (4) The Chaotic Age (including Proust, Joyce, Kafka, and Walt Whitman); and (5) Cataloging the Canon. Appendixes contain additional material on each age. (NKA)

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